

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF RUSHDEN.

Medical Officer's Annual Report, 1898.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit to you my Annual Report for the year ending December 31st, 1898.

The number of deaths during the year have been 192;—85 under one year; 38 one year and under 5; four 5 years and under 15; eleven 15 years and under 25; thirty-three 25 years and under 65; twenty-one 65 years and upwards.

The causes of death are as follows:—One from diphtheria, one from typhoid fever, two from puerperal fever, eleven from measles, nine from whooping cough, thirteen from diarrhoea, twenty-five from phthisis, thirty-one from bronchitis and pneumonia, thirteen from heart disease, five accidental deaths, one suicide, eighty from all other diseases.

The number of inhabited houses in Rushden are about 2,400, and allowing five persons for each house, the average estimated population would be 12,000. This brings the death rate to 16 per 1000.

The total number of births registered were 443:—213 boys, 230 girls. The birth rate being 36·9 per 1,000.

In looking through the causes of mortality I find there are thirteen deaths from zymotic disease, one from diphtheria, one from typhoid fever, two from puerperal fever, and nine from whooping cough. The increased death rate of the present year has been chiefly in young children, 123 deaths under five years of age, compared with 85 of last year. Several of these deaths were of babies prematurely born, some of them having only lived five minutes.

WHOOPING COUGH

was prevalent in January, nine deaths resulting from it; as it is very contagious, more precautionary measures against its spreading ought to be enforced.

SCARLET FEVER AND MEASLES.

There were eleven deaths from measles. A few fresh cases were reported each month up to the end of the year, and I was informed that there were several cases of scarlet fever which were not reported to me. Therefore in July I wrote the Council "As infectious cases are constantly arising with which it is necessary to deal at an early stage, I advise the putting in force of the Notification Act. Were it in working it would be compulsory for parents to notify any case to the Medical Officer."

In July as cases of measles were on the increase and had all the appearance of becoming an epidemic, I advised the closing of all the Schools, and also recommended the same measures as during the last Scarlet Fever epidemic, viz:—that the floors, desks, and forms be frequently washed with disinfectants, and that the school-room be well aired by having all windows left open.

TYPHOID FEVER.

Out of twenty-two cases of typhoid fever there was one death. The fever commenced in August and by September there were thirteen cases. It was known that eight of the above cases had their water supply from a surface well the pump of which was situated against the back premises of the house occupied by Joseph Green, pork butcher, High-street, and there is little doubt that the five other children who often played in Green's yard and the slaughter house, drank some of this well water, which was at any time liable to contamination, there being several nuisances in proximity to it. Three other cases originated from the same source.

In the case of Hooper, the first case of Typhoid, who lived next door to Green's, it is possible it might be attributed to the effluvia from the ventilating pipe in Green's yard which was connected with the sewer in West-street, for this sewer was infected with Typhoid Excreta at the commencement of the year. Dr. Paget, the County Medical Officer of Health, also investigated the above cases and was of the same opinion as to the cause of the fever.

In October there was a case up the Bedford Road. In this instance the probable cause was the contamination of the well water, nine yards away from which was a tub placed in ground into which the liquid contents of the piggeries ran; this tub was leaky and the contents had been overflowing, polluting the soil around. This must have found its way into the well, the water of which on examination I found bad.

Two other cases arose in November, these were attributed to drinking contaminated well water; and two cases in December in which the town water was drunk—the source of their origin could not be traced.

PHTHISIS.

There were twenty-five deaths from Phthisis. It is very probable that compulsory measures will soon be in force to guard the public against contracting this disease through their milk supply. It must be born in mind that overcrowding, damp, insufficient light, and dusty occupation are predisposing causes.

THE WATER SUPPLY.

The various schemes for procuring a more efficient supply of water have failed; this leaves us with a smaller quantity per head than we had last year, when it was only 8 gallons per head, whereas the minimum quantity should be 16. Taking into consideration the number of houses that had a direct supply to the water closets, and that 200 new houses have been built this year, a serious state of things might result as the sewers would not be properly flushed. Therefore it becomes necessary that another source of supply should be procured, and this should be proceeded with at once, as it will take a year or two to get a large scheme into working order.

I examined 19 samples of well water 11 of which were bad, and notices to that effect were placed on the pump.

A systematic inspection of the town including workshops and factories has been made: the latter were chiefly in a sanitary condition. Where nuisances existed this was soon abated.

Five cases of overcrowding were dealt with.

Mr. Martin, your sanitary inspector, reports: "Number of drains, including closet drains, repaired 121; nuisances, refuse, &c., abated, 80; closets altered, pail system adopted, 10; new closet pails supplied 34; houses fumigated, 43; cases where bedding was destroyed, 14; official order from Council to abate nuisance, 10; water pumps repaired, 11; overcrowding, 5; typhoid fever cases reported, 21. Workshops visited frequently during the year."

I beg to remain, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

C. R. OWEN,

Medical Officer of Health.

January 22nd, 1899.